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TONI PRECKWINKLE
PRESIDENT

July 16, 2019

The Honorable Lori Lightfoot
Mayor
City of Chicago
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Mayor Lightfoot: *Lori:*

I am writing on behalf of our shared constituents to extend another invitation for us to meet to discuss the gun violence that continues to plague Chicago and develop new strategies to enhance the safety of our communities.

Like the rest of the country, violent crime in Chicago continues to trend downward. Yet, despite this trend, gun violence continues to plague our city, especially communities of color on the south and west sides. Every weekend we lose precious lives and many of our communities live in constant fear. I am saddened by this senseless violence and I know you are too.

Over the last three years, through the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge, the County's public safety and public health stakeholders have had an unprecedented level of collaboration to address bail reform. I welcome you to join these efforts in a more substantive way.

We have an opportunity to leverage our combined resources and expertise to develop strategic solutions to reduce gun violence. However, I am concerned that the false narrative being put forward by Chicago Police Department Superintendent Eddie Johnson places significant blame on Cook County's reformed bail system as the root cause for gun violence. We both know this is simply not true.

Criminal justice reform has always been one of the top priorities of my administration, and I am proud of the outcomes we have achieved thus far, which have resulted in our safely reducing the jail population while protecting defendants' constitutional rights. Cook County's bond system is not the reason behind gun violence in Chicago. Gun violence was at its highest in 2016 but since then, as we instituted bail reform, the homicide rate and shootings have dropped substantially.

Our courts now utilize a comprehensive assessment tool that examines the risk of whether individuals will engage in criminal activity or fail to appear for their court hearings.

Of those who are arrested and subsequently enter the criminal court system, a recent report by the Office of the Chief Judge revealed that during an 18 month period that ended on March 31, 2019, only a very small fraction of defendants who were released on bond -- 0.6% -- were charged with a new violent offense. Additionally, the number of "no bail" decisions our judges have entered -- ordering the highest risk individuals be held in the jail -- has gone up nearly tenfold since we began instituting bail reform. The data in that report proves that bail reform has been done in a safe and effective manner.

The problem is not what happens when violent criminals come before judges in Chicago, but rather what happens when violent criminals are never brought before a judge. According to the University of Chicago Crime Lab, in Chicago only 26% of homicides result in an arrest and only 5% of shootings result in an arrest. Chicago's clearance rate for homicides continues to remain one of the lowest in the nation, leaving families of victims with no closure while violent perpetrators of crime are emboldened to continue wreaking havoc in our communities.

This is an epidemic of devastating proportions and Cook County is deeply involved in addressing this problem not only through our criminal court system but also through our health and hospitals system. Cook County Health spends on average \$30 - \$40 million annually to treat gunshot wounds. These costs only cover the initial hospital treatment, not the extensive outpatient or rehabilitation services many victims of gun violence require. In 2018 alone, Stroger Hospital cared for more than 950 patients with gunshot wounds. As we tend to gunshot victims, we also try to heal their spirits and help families build resilience, but in 95% of cases victims and families have to try to heal without the comfort of knowing the perpetrator has been caught.

Superintendent Johnson must stop misleading the public about why gun violence remains a challenging problem in Chicago. Attacking our public safety stakeholders is not the answer. I have been quite vocal in the need for a comprehensive and strategic violence reduction plan that focuses on investing in the very communities experiencing the highest levels of violence. We will not begin to effectively address the root causes of violence and stem the tide of bloodshed without real investments in economic opportunity, trauma informed services, quality education and supportive services.

The time is now for us to join together to have an honest conversation about how we can achieve our common goal of reducing the gun violence in Chicago.

We must all work together to find common solutions to the violence that is destroying so many families and communities. I renew my invitation for you and Superintendent Johnson to join our public safety stakeholders in a collaborative and candid discussion on strategies that will reduce gun violence, accelerate arrests of violent perpetrators of crime and eliminate the structural inequalities that provide the foundation for the root causes of such behavior.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Toni Preckwinkle

President, Cook County Board

CC: Chicago Police Department Superintendent Eddie Johnson
Office of the Mayor, Chief of Staff Maurice Classen
Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court Dorothy Brown
Cook County Public Defender Amy Campanelli
Cook County Sheriff Thomas Dart
Chief Justice Timothy C. Evans
Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx
Cook County Health Chief Executive Officer Dr. Jay Shannon